and

Interpretation of

Johann Sebastian Bach's Music

.ъу ARTHUR BRISKTER

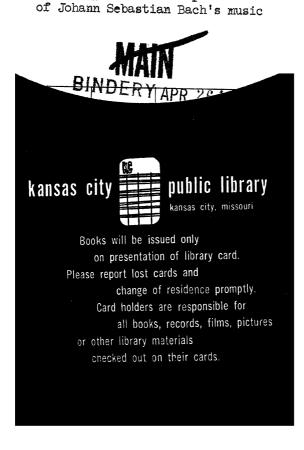
With Introduction

by Pablo Casals

2.00



786.4 Bllzbr 62-08182
Briskier
New approach to piano
t 62-08182
62-08182
Briskier \$3.00
New approach to piano
transcriptions & interpretation







-	DATE DUE			
scriptions				
_				
_				
_				
$_Music$				
-				
-				
_				
_				
_				
_				
_				
~				

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction by Pablo Casals	3
Piano Transcriptions of Bach's Music During the	
Romantic Era	7
Arrangements	9
Why Transcribe Bach's Organ Music Especially	
for Piano?	15
Keyboard Instruments	17
Objections to Transcribed Music	21
Difficulties in Transcribing Bach's Music for Piano	23
How Should Bach's Music Be Played?	25 -
What Is the Musical Style of Bach's Compositions?	31-
Playing of Piano Transcriptions	33
Interpretation of Bach's Music	37 -
Summary	39
Conclusion	41
Some of Bach's Compositions Transcribed for the Piano	
by Dr. Arthur Briskier	43
Bibliography	48
Diving upmy	
Y YOR OF MYOUGHY IN Y YOUR A MYONG	
LIST OF MUSICAL ILLUSTRATIONS	
Ex.	
1 Toccata in D.Minor	9
2 Toccata in C Major	10
3 Great Fantasy and Fugue in G Minor	11
4 Cantata 156 "Ich steh" mit einem Fuss im Grabe"	
Concerto in F Minor (for Piano or Violin)	16
5 Art of the Fugue	22
6 Adagio from the Toccata and Fugue in C Major	25
7 Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor	26
8 Ciaccona	26
9 Great Prelude and Fugue in B Minor	26
10 Fugue in G Minor from the Great Fantasy and Fugue.	27
11 Great Prelude and Fugue in A Minor	27
12 Little Fugue in G Minor	28
13 Fugue from the Toccata in C Major	28
14 Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor	31
15 Prelude and Fugue in A Minor from The Well	ΩŢ
Tempered Clavichord No. 20, Vol. 2	32
TOWNPOINT CHURAICHOLULITOS AUG A OLGA	<i>-</i>

posts betwee Brickies, for his Beck adition with best wishes. Prades (P.O.), France. December, 1950.

Bach's music is not sufficiently known and therefore not well understood. Contact with Bach's music should be direct. There is a general conservative tendency to consider his compositions in the light of their original presentation. Thus an organ composition is usually not accepted when played on the piano. Because of their greatness some of Bach's compositions should not be limited to a given instrument, since his music has an absolute intrinsic value. Human voices, wind and string instruments are still the same as in Bach's time, while the keyboard instruments have undergone changes. The beautiful tone of the Baroque organ is seldom heard to-day. The modern grand piano with the third sustaining pedal did not exist in Bach's time. This piano makes possible a flowing legato with a round, full tone and a clear rendering of any polyphonic composition. A piano transcription is fully justified.

Many piano transcriptions of Bach's music have been published. Most of them contain embellishments and alterations detrimental to the beauty and the spirit of his music. After profound study and thorough preparation, Dr. Arthur Briskier transcribed for the piano a few of Bach's masterpieces, some of them the most beautiful of the Weimar period. He also writes significantly about the approach to Bach's music, its interpretation and its meaning. This edition respects fully Bach's original text. Dr. Briskier gives a faithful piano transcription from organ music. This is not merely another edition. Contrary to many existing transcriptions where the interpretation is pre-established and where Bach is present only through the transcriber, this edition enables the pianist to be directly in contact with Bach and to express himself through his personal interpretation.

Para carals



Dedicated to the memory

of

MRS. ALBERT SCHWEITZER

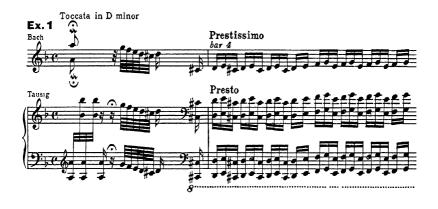
PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS OF BACH'S MUSIC DURING THE ROMANTIC ERA

Nearly forgotten for a century, Bach was discovered by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in the height of the romantic period. The piano was then the most popular instrument, and great artists of the time transcribed Bach's music for their own concert use. The influence of romanticism and the desire of the performers to display their brilliant technique caused many of Bach's masterpieces to be known as arrangements for piano. Arrangements are but instrumental adaptations. To imitate the characteristics of the organ, for example, and to compensate for the absence of its stops, modifications were introduced. Since Bach did not always indicate with precision the use of stops and each organist is free to choose them according to his taste, why should the piano transcriptions provide substitutions for what does not exist in the original? Editor and transcriber, nevertheless, often tried to embellish the master's work in order to make it acceptable, and thus the genuine beauty, sincerity and immeasurable profundity of Bach's compositions became distorted. Added harmonies, brilliant passages of

Part of this work is reprinted from The Music Review, Vol. XV, No. 3, August 1954 virtuosity, prolonged codas detract from this music. What is important is the music itself and not the instrumental technique. Bach's music has its own value apart from any instrument, even when the instrument was chosen by the composer. Adaptations with modifications are but vain accessories, which dress up this music and lessen its greatness. There is a conventional way of interpreting Bach's music, accepted by performers and listeners alike. Alterations of the text may satisfy some musicians, but is this doing justice to Bach's music? Unquestionably the best way to discover this music is by studying the original text.

ARRANGEMENTS

There are a great many piano "arrangements" and a few will be mentioned for illustration.



In this well-known Toccata, Bach himself indicated the way the mordent (ω) should be played, namely, a-g-a, yet Tausig transcribed it as $a-b_b-a-b_b-a$. In the same bar the group of five notes ends on a c # as g and not g. In bar 4 the master mentioned the very rare prestissimo, but the arranger changed it to presto. Bach's simple notes became octaves in both hands. Many additions in sixths, thirds and octaves are found in this transcription.

Here is an example of Busoni's arrangement of the organ Toccata in C major:



The simple opening (Ex. 2) and the wave-like passage starting in the 9th bar are modified here. In the 79th bar the pause 7 % is a part of the fugue's theme; in the arrangement this is overshadowed by doubling the upper counterpoint. Bach ends (Ex. 2b) his fugue with a progressively descending line at the 141st bar, while Busoni finishes this work by adding three extra bars of ascending chords!

The arrangements by Franz Liszt seem to be the most faithful, yet his transcriptions are not entirely identical with the originals. For example, the great Fantasy and Fugue in G minor, one of the most beautiful compositions of the master, starts with an eloquent appeal, as usual a mordent (**)(Ex.3) to be played: g-f # -g, which is missing in the arrangement. The recitativo for single voice is here arranged with a counterpoint. In the 20th bar the one flowing, ascending line is tripled with thirds and sixths.



From these examples one can see how much pianistic virtuosity encroached upon the greatness of this music. This probably was justified during the romantic era. In our times transcriptions still are necessary but they should be faithful to the original versions.

What is the difference between transcriptions made at the present time and those from a preceding epoch? Generally speaking, music in the eighteenth century was considered to be only a listening pleasure.

Later on, when Bach was discovered in the romantic period, his music was evidently thought to be too simple, and therefore arrangements were made. To-day, however, due to the evolution of time and education, it is easy to visualize the third dimension of Bach's music, namely the depth of it. Therefore the artificially created perspective of the arrangements made during the romantic era becomes useless.

Organists always play the music exactly as Bach composed it, while pianists, except for those who read organ scores, play organ music "arranged" for them, for the most part. In playing the arrangement, therefore, the pianist does not interpret Bach's music but the modified version of the transcriber, such as Liszt, Tausig, Bülow, Busoni, etc. It is true that when these outstanding musicians played Bach's music, it was their own interpretation of the original compositions. But when their transcriptions are played by others, one does not reproduce the original but the interpretation of the arranger.

Piano transcriptions enable one to play and to listen to music originally composed for any instrument. Certain compositions are played only in church, and some are of such magnitude that musicians may desire to listen to them more often and even play them at home. The beauty and greatness of these compositions as well as the correct phrasing and simple rendering of these masterpieces are in themselves perfectly sufficient also for public and concert performances without the necessity of adding or changing notes which only increase the sound-volume of the piano. Piano transcriptions provide individual simple readings which are independent of perfection in musical interpretation. Had organ compositions been published for piano use, without additions or modifications and with due respect to the text of Bach, there would be no justification for this edition.

To-day, over two hundred years after his death, musicians are trying to find the true and simple Bach. After careful consideration and with some hesitancy, I began this work, thanks to the suggestions given to me personally by Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who encouraged me to play only the original music of Bach.

For this work I used autographs, prints from original plates by C.F. Peters, and the *Bachgesellschaft* edition published by Breitkopf and Härtel. These are without any indication of interpretation, and I took the liberty to add an example of my own interpretation, phrasing, dynamics, *tempi* and fingering. Of course, this arrangement is not the only one to be studied and it does not presume to represent the ideal way of interpreting Bach's music. It seems the best way would be for each musician to find his own personal interpretation according to the original version.

WHY TRANSCRIBE BACH'S ORGAN MUSIC ESPECIALLY FOR PIANO?

Transcriptions are fully justified. If so, why did not Bach transcribe himself?

Bach himself did transcribe many of his compositions from one instrument to another. Often he even did the same with the works of other composers, such as Vivaldi, Marcello and Telemann. One of Vivaldi's concerti for four violins and string orchestra in B minor, Bach transcribed for four claviers and in A minor. The master did not intend a given composition for a particular instrument. For example, he composed the same D minor Concerto both for clavier solo and for violin solo. He transcribed for two claviers and orchestra his Concerto in C minor for oboe, violin and orchestra. Here is an interesting example where Bach transcribes his Cantata No. 156: "Ich steh' mit einem Fuss im Grabe," as the second part of the violin (or piano) Concerto in F minor; the tempo adagio is changed into largo, F major into A flat major:



Besides the fact that Bach himself transcribed, it is appropriate to mention that instruments undergo changes and disappear, while Bach's music remains intact. On the other hand, the modern piano did not exist in the eighteenth century, and it is evident that transcriptions for this instrument are necessary.

KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS

Let us compare now the keyboard instruments. The instruments used in our time are not the same as those in Bach's period. In his days the popular keyboard instruments were the *organ*, the *harpsichord* (the spinet, the virginal and the cembalo had the harpsichord action or a similar one), and the *clavichord*.

The Baroque organ of that era achieved perfection. The harpsichord and the clavichord were only crude forerunners of the modern piano, whatever their unquestionable historical value may be. Because of the metallic noise of the action of these instruments, a pure musical sound cannot be obtained.

The Organ

It is known that the organ is the most powerful of all instruments, has the widest range of sound, and is, in fact, an entire orchestra in itself. The organist can change the component parts of this orchestra merely by pulling the appropriate stops. As a wind instrument, it gives a flowing

line to the melody. The volume of intensity being uniform for the entire instrument, however, it is somewhat difficult to subdue or change the nuance of one voice in relation to the whole work. Hence in polyphonic compositions it is not easy to differentiate a particular middle voice, which is very desirable when this voice represents the theme. When a key is struck on the organ it opens a mechanical valve which permits the passage of air. This always produces the same neutral, ready-made, uniform sound through the pipe, and the performer has no control over the quality of the sound he produces; as on the harpsichord, the production of a sound on the organ is independent of the finger-touch of the interpreter. Moreover, no staccato is possible on the organ.

Piano

Nowadays the most popular instrument is the piano. Here are a few of its advantages and disadvantages.

The piano is a percussion instrument, and one of its major imperfections, notwithstanding the pedals, is the difficulty of sustaining a sound or increasing its original intensity. Contrary to the organ, the sound, once produced. actually decreases in force and disappears within a few seconds. The duration of the sound is limited and its limits are in direct relation to the length of the piano chord. The piano, however, has this advantage, that as soon as the key is struck the sound is heard. There is a perfect synchronization between the finger-touch and the sound perception, which is not always possible on the organ. On the other hand, it is the quality of the finger-touch which produces the desired shading of the sound. By a very gentle touch and a comprehensive use of pedals, the modern piano can become a very intimate instrument. Thus the personality of the pianist is reflected to an extent never reached by an organist or a harpsichordist.

The third sustaining pedal of the American piano enables the pianist to prolong the bass at will, thus simulating the organ. Because of the piano structure and the different finger pressure, it is possible to play each middle voice of a polyphonic composition with the exact intended shade. Thus the middle voices are not overshadowed by the bass or the soprano. Among all the keyboard instruments, it is the modern piano which enables the production of a singing tone of high quality never before achieved.

Finally, the most compelling reason for transcribing Bach is that the master composed for the organ some of his most beautiful, if not his most intimate and profound masterpieces.

It is appropriate to mention here that the greatness and beauty of Bach's organ compositions were evident only on the Baroque organs, which have become scarce to-day and have been replaced by electrical organs.



OBJECTIONS TO TRANSCRIBED MUSIC

Musicians generally prefer to play a given composition on the instrument originally indicated by the composer, and consequently reject any transcription for a different instrument. In so doing, they forget what was mentioned previously, namely, that Bach himself transcribed from one instrument to another, changing even the original tonality of the composition. (See example given: Cantata No. 156).

Let us consider, for illustration, that a musical transcription is similar to a literary translation, although music is not a spoken language. Thus Shakespeare should be read in English, Racine in French, Goethe in German, Homer in Greek, the Old Testament in Hebrew. But since there are very few polyglots, everyone will agree that it is better to read a translation than not to know these mastermasterpieces at all.

Nevertheless, there are objections to transcribed music, and it seems that the main one is the habit resulting from listening only to the instrument originally indicated.

It is natural that the composer's intentions should be respected, and, consequently, so far as possible a composition should be played on the instrument indicated by the composer. Moreover, it is known that each instrument is characterized by its particular *timbre*. This *timbre* is lost due to the transcription, but at the same time all the characteristics of the piano are acquired. However, a transcription does not change the intrinsic value of a musical composition. Only the *timbre* is changed.

Here is an example where it is not even necessary to change a given *timbre*. Indeed, the *Art of Fugue* was not considered for any instrument.



How could this masterpiece ever be heard without an adaptation for a given instrument or orchestra?

Here is another example. A violinist who has played and heard the Ciaccona* hundreds of times usually objects to a piano performance of this composition. Had Bach composed the Sonata in D minor not for violin but for piano, it is possible that no violinist would have dreamed of transcribing it for violin and never would have enjoyed playing this monumental composition. It is possible that if Bach had had time and a modern piano, he would have transcribed the Ciaccona.

^{*}Also spelled Chaconne.

DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSCRIBING BACH'S MUSIC FOR PIANO

There are many difficulties. First, one must find and study the originals carefully. But which is the true manuscript? Bach's wife, his children and his pupils imitated his handwriting so well that often it is difficult to know what is authentic. In some of the manuscripts there are many corrections and changes, and we do not know who made them.

Here is an interesting example:

There are about twenty-five handwritten copies of the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue. Which is the original? Which is the one corrected last by the master? Who can say which is the best one? Bach was a perfectionist, correcting his compositions and making substantial changes over and over again. Some editors, however, continue to print the first version even though new discoveries have been made in recent years. A great deal could be added and changed in accordance with Bach's own modifications even in such excellent editions as Breitkopf & Härtel's Bachgesellschaft, which did not always use Bach's autographs. There are

many piano arrangements by Busoni, Bülow, Bischoff, Schänker and others.

Once the original text is adopted, new difficulties arise in connection with the characteristics of the instruments for which the composition was intended. For example, an organ composition transcribed for piano should not lose any of its musical components. What was played by the fingers on the organ should be so played on the piano. The organ pedal music is best performed on the piano by the left hand in octaves, the left thumb playing the organ pedal note or even the note an octave lower. This depends on the position of the right hand and the musical line. When playing organ music on the piano, it is good to think in terms of organ sound volume. The sustaining third pedal of the modern grand piano permits the holding of the bass as long as indicated for the organ. The exceedingly deep sound of the piano bass gives an organlike background, while the two hands continue to play on the keyboard. There is no interference with changing harmonies and no confusion. The most faithful transcription, note for note, would remain incomplete if the musical interpretation were not considered simultaneously.

HOW SHOULD BACH'S MUSIC BE PLAYED?

How did Bach play? Nobody knows, although he is certainly considered one of the greatest organists of his time. But we have no record of his playing, and this probably is the reason why the interpretation of his music is so much discussed. Thus, some musicians suggest playing just what is printed, correctly and evenly, without emotion. Can such a way of interpretation be applied to the Adagio of the Toccata in C major for organ (Ex. 6), or the Passacaglia for cembalo or organ (Ex. 7), or the Ciaccona for violin alone (Ex. 8), or the Praeludium in B minor for organ (Ex. 9)?





The difficulty of interpreting Bach's music is all the greater because the master did not indicate any phrasing, tempi, or dynamics. Why not?

Was it because in his time there were only craftsmanlike musicians who were concerned only with the technical, never the expressive, part of music?

Was it because good musicians (the great artists of today) were so scarce that Bach did not expect more than a simple and correct reading of his music?

Was it because polyphony was a new form of music, the youngest of all fine arts?

Was it because in the pre-romantic era emotions were expressed soberly and objectively?

Was it because he never expected his compositions to outlive him?

Was it because his music was so simple to him, its interpretation so evident, that he did not think it necessary to instruct the performer?

Or, finally, did Bach intentionally leave to everyone complete freedom of interpretation, so that each musician could know the joy of discovering the hidden treasures of his masterpieces for himself? No universally accepted opinion about the interpretation of Bach's music is possible to-day.

Themes, Phrasing and Tempi

Themes

We can follow the musical line and the thematic development throughout his compositions. Indeed, each of Bach's compositions is built on the foundation of one or more musical ideas. These are presented by a few notes or a few bars. One can say that the theme, for example, of a fugue is a miniature composition and should be played clearly, concretely and with conviction.

Phrasing

Phrasing, which is the most important, should not be influenced by the bars or the rhythm. Take, for example, the Fugue in G minor (Ex. 10); (1) and (2) show Albert Schweitzer's phrasing, while (3) the phrasing of Mattheson, a contemporary of Bach, displaces the equilibrium of the phrase in relation to the bars and distorts the original text. Another example is the Prelude in A minor, (Ex. 11,1) is phrased by Albert Schweitzer, (Ex. 11,2) shows the tendency of some pianists to prolong the upper notes.



The phrasing is influenced by the performer's breathing but depends on the musical line. Here is an example (Ex. 12), the Fugue for organ in G minor (the little).



The accent does not necessarily fall on the strong beat of the bar, but is rather influenced by the motion of the phrase. It is known that musical ideas are separated by a short silence, a breathing spell. Occasionally, the pause in Bach's music may be just as important as the sounds. A simple example is the theme of the Fugue from the organ Toccata in C major mentioned previously (Ex. 2a).



Tempi

These are dependent on three factors: the *spirit* of the composition, the *period* during which the performer lives and his *personality*. Usually the character of a composition gives a sufficient idea of how it should be played, fast or slowly. What *tempo* should be applied to a given composition of Bach when interpreted nowadays? At the same time another question comes to our minds: how fast did Bach himself play the same composition?

It is possible that in Bach's time and preceding his period there was a conventional marking of the musical speed with a relationship between the *tempo* in words, *e.g.* allegro, in figures, *e.g.* 3/4 on the one hand, and the values of the notes, *e.g.* 1 on the other hand.

The absence of a specified tempo in the modern printed music may be due either to the fact that the editors abandoned the old and obsolete notation or that Bach himself did not mention any movement. In any case, it is possible that no specified tempo in the past meant a conventional speed, for example, andante. This, however, depended upon two factors: time and place. Indeed, at the same time a given composition was played andante in a northern country while it was played allegro in the South. Moreover, what was understood as andante in one country was different in another. At the same place tempi varied: what was played slowly at one time was played fast later, or vice versa. Finally, the performer has his own tempo, which depends on his nervous constitution. The rate of the heart-beat influences the speed of the performance. In the eighteenth century, when metronomes were unknown and the pulse served as a time measure, the highly nervous performer played slower and the phlegmatic played a little faster than their heart-beats would indicate.

Rubato playing is fully justified, since in the eighteenth century the timing was not strictly applied and the performance was mostly like an improvisation. The rallentando at the end of a composition, and the sudden passage from ff to pp, or vice versa, are too well known to be discussed here.

WHAT IS THE MUSICAL STYLE OF BACH'S COMPOSITIONS?

It is difficult to say that it is purely classical. Indeed, because of the different musical styles of his compositions, Bach cannot be confined only to the period in which he lived. In addition to his typical classical works, it is easy to find among his compositions a genuine *romantic* mood, for example, the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue (Ex. 14).



or even a modern tendency can be seen in the Prelude no. 20 of the second volume of *The Well-Tempered Clavichord* (Ex. 15).



Bach's music is independent, as we can see, of the time factor.

PLAYING OF PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS

Mention was previously made of the rationality of piano transcriptions. Some of the aspects of Bach's music were also discussed. It seems now appropriate to examine the interpretation of these transcriptions.

Generally speaking, many compositions can be played on any kind of piano and the way of producing the sound by striking the keyboard may be irrelevant. Moreover, the intellectual or emotional approach does not have to be particularly stressed. Indeed, the majority of such compositions call only for a reading with either a fair display of technique or even a brilliant performance. The execution of notes slow or fast, soft or forceful is all these compositions require and such a rendering will fully satisfy the listener.

On the contrary, the masterpieces of Bach, mentioned here, have other objectives, therefore an indifferent, although correct performance of these works, will prove to be only a lifeless reading. This kind of music, in order to be properly conveyed, requires not only a perfect technique and an intelligent rendering, but also an emotional and eloquent unfolding. When these three factors are combined, then, and only then will the interpretation approach what this music calls for. Playing notes correctly is of acoustic importance. However, the notes in this kind of music are only a medium helping to convey something else than just pitch, duration, speed and dynamics of sounds. For the interpretation of these masterpieces, besides technique a higher degree of maturity and a deeper insight are necessary. In order to achieve the desired results on the piano, a few remarks concerning the instrument and the piano playing will now be discussed.

The Instrument

Because of its wide range, the pleasant sound-quality and the infinite possibilities of shading, the piano is ideal to convey some of Bach's polyphonic masterpieces. The piano, preferably a grand piano with a third sustaining pedal, should have a full, round, mellow, singing and even tone throughout the entire keyboard. The bass should be deep and sonorous, the treble — soft, never metallic. The brilliant, steely, sharp sounds of some concert pianos will not help to render this kind of music "cantabile."

The Technique

The physical approach depends on the fingers and their elasticity as well as on some of the player's skeleton characteristics, his joints and his muscles. Technique is part of the fingering and of the sound production.

Fingering. The fingering depends on the musical line and also upon the constitution, shape, size and particular qualities of the player's hand. Therefore there can be no

pre-established standard fingering for all hands, since each hand is different, requiring a particular and individual fingering. Each player should modify the fingering according to his own hand. The fundamental principle of piano playing is known to be the audible production of even, equal notes, with all the rhythmical variations, in a given, not too rigid tempo, with the appropriate dynamics and, above all, a pleasant, singing sound.

Sound Production. In Bach's music it is important that the sound should never be forceful, metallic nor neutral; it should never be produced by striking martellato-like. On the contrary, it should be obtained by a gentle pressure of the fingers which, at all times, should be in constant contact with the keyboard surface prior to lowering of the keys. The pianist should mentally hear the sound before its physical production occurs and the sound he is actually "creating" should appear as if the tips of the player's fingers were directly in contact with the strings, not through the intermediary of the keys and the hammers. For obvious reasons such a sound can never be produced by other keyboard instruments, such as the organ or the harpsichord which produce either abrupt, metallic noises or ready-made neutral continuous sounds. A careful attention necessary at the very beginning for production of a singing tone and a flowing legato will ultimately become a reflex during interpretation.

The Playing

The interpreter, while playing the piano transcriptions should be aware of the particular characteristics proper to each instrument for which the composition was written. It is advisable for the player to listen to these works interpreted on the original instruments for which they were

composed, such as organ, violin, harpsichord, etc., thus instantly the advantage of the piano interpretation will become obvious. In this way the pianist, without trying to imitate a given instrument, would be able to have a clear idea of Bach's musical intentions, which he could then convey to the listener. For example, while interpreting a violin composition in the mid and upper register of the piano, the player would think of the violin bowing, phrasing and "cantilena." Similarly, while interpreting an organ composition in the lower register of the piano the player would think of the deep sound of the organ pipes. This kind of thinking will undoubtedly influence his playing. Thus, the correct piano interpretation would have the advantage of bringing out, as far as possible, the inherent qualities only of different instruments, without their respective limitations. However, though the piano seems to be the best possible instrument for this kind of music, yet its sound will not be the final goal of the interpreter, but only a helpful means of conveying this music which is independent of any instrument. Indeed, Bach's music is not instrumental, it is music itself, just music.

When interpreted correctly on the piano, these masterpieces originally not composed for the piano become pure music, instead of organ-, harpsichord-, violin-, or even piano-music. What is of importance is the music, not the playing, nor the instrument. However, the playing must do justice to this music.

INTERPRETATION of BACH'S MUSIC

Any composition, for whatever instrument, can be played on the piano. The piano rendering should be clear, simple and above all, earnest. The pianist should strive to make the piano "sing" since, as we have said, this kind of music does not call for the "martellato" playing, even when considering so called "toccatas." All polyphonic passages and fugues should be played not only by bringing out distinctly each individual voice, but these voices should be conveyed in such a way as if each piano voice were a true human singing voice with its particular tone-color (timbre). While during a spoken interchange it is inconceivable to hear two or more people talking together, in Bach's music each voice has to sing its own melody and the greater the number of voices, the richer the composition. When all the voices are heard together, they create a new combined multiple musical line which is the polyphony with resulting

harmonies, though each voice remains a distinct entity. Thus a four voice fugue should always be presented as a singing vocal quartet: bass, tenor, alto and soprano.

Intelligent Rendering

Mechanical playing of notes requires but physical, digital ability. In general, a composition is analyzed from the theoretic, harmonic and contrapuntal points, but the full understanding of a composition will depend upon the musical gifts of the interpreter. This will be instantly recognized by his phrasing and his breathing spells (Luftpausen). Both the technique as well as the intelligent approach can be taught, developed and improved according to the degree of individual physical and intellectual possibilities. This is part of musical education. The technique can be bettered, evaluated and compared; it can be modified and discussed. However Bach's music calls for something more.

Inner Value

Besides the physical and the intellectual approach some musical masterpieces require a special consideration. The emotional impact of great music is rarely felt and can only be conveyed when the interpreter is able to express his feeling while at the same time the listener has enough depth to perceive it.

SUMMARY

Two subjects were discussed in this work: first, the justification of piano transcriptions, second, the interpretation of these transcriptions.

Piano transcriptions should absolutely conform to the originals, namely, they should contain only notes composed by J. S. Bach, without any additions or modifications. The interpretation, which is a reflection of the personal comprehension of the player, should be left to the discretion of each individual, provided the musical unfolding is performed with a continuous, eloquent, and convincing piano playing through a living, warm, and deeply felt sound.



CONCLUSION

Many reasons have been mentioned to justify transcriptions for the modern piano; the most compelling of them all are the incomparable greatness, the unusual majesty, and the true beauty of some of Bach's organ compositions. In spite of the fact that the modern piano seems to be the most appropriate instrument for transcriptions, an intelligent and moving interpretation on the piano is not always sufficient to convey all the inner significance of this music.

It was mentioned before that Bach would perhaps be satisfied with a simple and correct reading of his scores, but there is no doubt that this music calls for something else. Indeed, its greatness lies not only in the melodic line, but also between the notes, in the silences and in the breathing spells. The beauty resides in the flowing of independent and combined melodies as well as in the resulting harmonic modulations. Bach's music is unsurpassed in its architectural and polyphonic structure as well as in its melodic and harmonic unfoldings.

N3112

The greatness of Bach's music seems to appear only when one has done away with technical difficulties and then the interpretation is no longer intellectual. The rendering of this music should be such as to bring out the inner qualities in an atmosphere of communion between the player and the listener. While the technique and the intelligent interpretation are the common attributes of a good musician — he is the one who knows —, on the other hand the emotional impact, necessary to convey the depth and beauty of these masterpieces, is the distinctive quality of the true artist — he is the one who feels. Occasionally, both knowledge and feeling are present in the same person.

Only a deep musical feeling will help to grasp the inner value of these compositions. There is something which is beyond the reach of human senses or judgment. It can neither be discussed, measured, nor compared, and the spoken word cannot describe it. It is of a higher order and can only be felt. Some people, and they are few, feel spontaneously — they need no explanation. However, the majority who do not even realize that they do not feel, have to be awakened and taught. Moreover it is impossible to know a composition of Bach or to be through with it. The more one studies and meditates, the more, it seems, is left to be discovered. What a strange paradox! Indeed, every time one listens to or interprets one of Bach's compositions something new is found and one can never fully know how immense this music is.

My hope is threefold: first, that this essay will encourage pianists to use only piano transcriptions faithful to the originals; second, that pianists will try to make out of the piano a singing instead of a percussive instrument for the rendering of Bach's music; and finally, that their interpretation of these masterpieces will be a true improvisation. Thus will Bach's music when played on the piano become what it really is — transcendent.

Some of J. S. Bach's Compositions Transcribed for the Piano by Dr. Arthur Briskier*

 Prelude and Fugue in A minor. (Prelude 53 measures, Fugue 151 measures).

This work was composed in Weimar in 1709. Originally the Fugue was composed for Klavier (Koethen). Later on, Bach has transcribed it for organ. The original manuscript seemed to be lost. For my transcription I have compared many known editions as well as a manuscript which is probably of Johann Peter Kellner. The greatness of this composition will become evident when a constant moderation will be maintained from the beginning till the end. An earnest rendering with a singing tone and a relentless legato will help to bring out the perfection of this majestic composition. (Approximate duration 10 min. 40 sec.)

^{*}Publishers, Carl Fischer, Inc., New York

2. Great Prelude and Fugue in B minor.*
(Prelude 85 measures, Fugue 88 measures).

This work was composed in Leipzig between 1727-1736. It is one of the rare organ compositions of Bach that have come down to us in his own handwriting. The Prelude is of unusual beauty, while the four-voice Fugue typifies perfectly, from its start, Bach's mysticism. In my transcription the facsimile of the original organ manuscript is facing the piano score page by page, virtually note for note. (Approximate duration 11 min. 22 sec.)

Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor.*
 (Passacaglia 168 measures, Fugue 292 measures).

This composition was completed either in Weimar in 1716, or later in Koethen. The original manuscript seems to have been lost. For my piano transcription I have secured a copy** in the handwriting of one of Bach's pupils; it may therefore be assumed that Bach did see and most probably corrected this copy. Bach borrowed the first four measures of the theme from a contemporary French composer and organist, André Raison (1700). The composition is a mixture of both the Passacaglia and the Ciaccona forms, since the theme appears not only in the bass, but also in other voices. Originally composed for the pedal-cembalo, this masterpiece was later on transcribed by Bach for the organ. However, the broad intervals of the arpeggios starting at the 169th measure show clearly that this magnificent composition was intended for a keyboard instrument, such as the modern piano, though such a keyboard instrument did not exist in the 18th century. The full and the richly variable tone of the piano, as well as its dynamic possibilities, justify

^{**}Copy kindly supplied by Universitaetsbibliothek, Tuebingen.

the return of this work where it belongs, namely the piano. In this majestic composition, both the Passacaglia as well as the Fugue start with the same theme of André Raison, however to the former Bach has added four measures. (Approximate duration 15 min. 30 sec.)

Toccata and Fugue in D minor.
 (Toccata 30 measures, Fugue 143 measures).

This Toccata was composed in Weimar in 1709, or perhaps in Arnstadt. The original manuscript of this organ work seems to have been lost. I have compared many different editions and I have used sources for my piano transcription which seemed to me to be free from errors and closest to the composer's intentions. (Approximate duration 7 min. 30 sec.)

5. Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C major. (Toccata 84 measures, Adagio 31 measures and Fugue 141 measures).

This work was composed in Weimar in 1709. The composer's manuscript seems to have been lost. For my piano transcription, after having compared many existing editions I have used a copy which is most probably in the handwriting of Bach's pupil, J. Ludwig Krebs. The Toccata is a very brilliant organ work with effective harmonic modulations. The Adagio is represented by a most beautiful "Aria" with accompaniment of single portamento notes. The greatness and simplicity make this composition most outstanding. The Fugue contains within the theme very characteristic and eloquent pauses. (Approximate duration 15 min.)

6. Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor. (Fantasy 79 measures, Fugue 161 measures).

This work was composed in Koethen in 1720, or later in Leipzig in 1730. The autograph seems to have been lost. Many copies have been made by Anna Magdalena Bach, by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach or by Bach's pupils. Agricola, Krebs, and others. When comparing the existing different copies and editions, many errors and detrimental additions become evident. The Chromatic Fantasy is one of the most perfect and the best known example of J. S. Bach's "romantic" compositions. This work is unique because of its dramatic and eloquent recitativo and the unsurpassed poetic coda. The Fugue is built on a chromatic ascending theme. Some editors, including the well known Bachgesellschaft, publish the Fugue with a change in the entry of the second voice (eighth measure). This appears questionable, since Bach has usually maintained the established rhythm of the theme, and because the autograph is missing, it may be assumed that the d-e, instead of d, is the copyist's change. (Approximate duration 11 min.)

(A microfilm copy of a manuscript of J. G. Walther was kindly supplied by the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.)

7. Fugue in G minor (the ''little'').* (68 measures).

This charming composition was terminated in Weimar in 1709, or perhaps later in Arnstadt. The original autograph seems to have been lost. For my piano transcription I have used a manuscript which is most probably in the handwriting of Bach's pupil, J. Ludwig Krebs.** The term 'little'

^{**}Kindly supplied by the Westdeutsche Bibliothek, Marburg.

has been added to this Fugue in order to distinguish it from the "great" Fugue, also in G minor. (Approximate duration 3 min. 45 sec.)

8. Ciaccona in D minor.

(257 measures).

The theme and variation constitute the last part of the 2d Partita for violin alone, which was composed in Koethen in 1720. The manuscript of J. S. Bach is lost. For my piano transcription, I followed Busoni's arrangement for piano, but without additions in the main subject, and have used copies in the handwriting of Anna Magdalena Bach and a copy which is probably written by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. This masterpiece is one of the most frequently transcribed compositions of Bach, however it does not seem that all these transcriptions do justice to this monumental work full of joy, sadness, eloquent declamation, and profound greatness. (Approximate duration 15 min.)

9. Great Fantasy and Fugue in G minor.* (Fantasy 49 measures, Fugue 115 measures).

This great work was composed in Koethen in 1720 and played the same year by Bach for Adam Reinken in Hamburg. The original of this, probably the most beautiful composition of Bach, seems to have been lost. In preparing my piano transcription, I have compared many editions including the Bachgesellschaft, Griepenkerl, Albert Schweitzer, Marcel Dupré, and others. As a source for the Fugue, which is undoubtedly one of the most perfect examples of its kind, I have secured and used a reproduction of a manuscript** in the handwriting of Johann Gottfried Walther, a pupil and cousin of J.S. Bach. (Approximate duration 10 min. 40 sec.)

^{**}Kindly supplied by the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BACH, ANNA MAGDALENA

"Die kleine Chronik", Koehler & Umelang, Leipzig, 1930 BACH, C.P.E.

"Versuch ueber die Wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen", Berlin, 1759

BRISKIER, ARTHUR

"Piano Transcriptions of J. S. Bach", The Music Review, Vol. XV, No. 3, August 1954

DAVID, H. T. and MENDEL, A.

"The Bach Reader", New York, 1945

DOLMETSCH, ARNOLD

"The Interpretation of the Music of the 17 & 18th Centuries", Oxford University Press, London

DUFOURCO, NORBERT

"J. S. Bach, Le Maître de l'Orgue," Librairie Floury, Paris, 1948

FORKEL, J. N.

"Ueber J. S. Bach's Leben", Leipzig, 1802

GEIRINGER, KARL

"The Bach Family", Oxford University Press, New York, 1954

KELLER, HERMANN

"Die Orgelwerke Bachs - Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Geschichte", Leipzig, 1948

PIRRO, ANDRE

"J. S. Bach", Alcan, Paris, 1906

SCHMIEDER, WOLFGANG

"Thematisch-Systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke von J. S. Bach", Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1950

SCHWEITZER, ALBERT

"J. S. Bach, le Musicien - Poète", Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1905

SPITTA, PHILIPP

"J. S. Bach", Leipzig, 1873 and 1879

WILLIAMS, C. F. ABDY

"Bach", J. M. Dent & Co., London, 1900

WOLFRUM, PHILIPP

"J. S. Bach", Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1910



CONNERSAL TIBRARY TIBR

UNIVERSAL LIBRARY